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Editorial

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them? How could I balance the dream-world and the waking world?

I opened the closet door, then the attic door. I had never been in the attic at night before and the light of the moon, shining through the round window, made things strange. The chest was a black shadow in the corner -- square, unmoving. There was a world inside it: my grandmother's. All the phantom people and situations that had filled her mind, every night for a lifetime, now filled this box, and I had inherited them.

As my eyes adjusted to the dark I saw again the familiar stars, hills, animals, people, and forests gleaming dully in the wood. Yet somehow they seemed changed and unfamiliar now, and I was afraid to look at them too closely.

Quickly, I walked across the attic, opened the hidden compartment, and put back the key. Unless I learned why I had received the books and how to use them, I would never use the key again.

Without looking back, I left the attic, shut the two doors and turned off the light in my room. But for some reason I wanted to cry, and it was impossible to sleep. I remembered one of Grandmother's dreams, in which the teacher Eliel has been an alchemist, who transformed lead into shining gold, and now my mind was like his crucible, burning in the fire, with all the images boiling up inside me...

Sometime during the night I opened my eyes. A bright mist filled the center of the room, and I watched half in fear and half in joy as it whirled and spun into the luminous shape of an old man. He was robed in green and blue, and in his hand was the silver key. He was Eliel, the dream-teacher from Grandmother's stories.

"Take the key," he said. "Did you think you could throw this gift away? You can never escape what you have inherited and what is always within you."

Feeling foolish, yet somehow relieved, I took the key.

He gestured, and a circle of fire appeared in the center of the floor. On this was a crucible, and its contents shone with a living intensity: they were all the images of the inner and outer worlds, transformed by the flames.

Eliel lifted the crucible and emptied it onto the floor. Its contents settled, cooled, became a cube, became the chest. "Open it," he said, and I did. It was filled with books, not in Grandmother's writing but in my own; and they were not dreams but stories, half-dream and half-waking, a bridge between the worlds that made them one. And so I understood, and knew what I must do.

Joyfully, I picked up a notebook, turned to an empty page, and began to write

EDITORIAL

Hello again! Well, that was fast - or so it seems to me, writing this before the end of May. This is our American Fantasy issue. After we announced the theme we received many letters asking, "What's American fantasy?" To which, after much careful consideration, we make the only response possible under the circumstances: We Know It When We See It.

We've seen a lot of it, and we've printed a lot, too. It ranges from Charles Rampp's angry-city-dragon-diatribes to Mary Ann Hodge's portrait of familial bliss to Doug Rossman's Cherokee myths, in both poetry and prose. Angelee Anderson's story, set partly in England, is nonetheless an American fantasy, as you will doubtless agree upon reading it.

This is no attack upon classic Celtic and other-worldly fantasy; we like that, we print plenty of it, and we'll continue to do so. No, this is *lifting up* and tuning-in to a voice not often heard, at least not when you think of fantasy and myth. This is an *homage* to upcoming Mythcon XIX, the nineteenth conference of the Mythopoeic Society, to be held at the end of July in Berkeley, California, with the theme, "Legends for a New Land: Fantasy In America." (See the ad later in the magazine for details.)

This is not a one-time-only offer. We'll continue to print American fantasy (along with the Celtic and the generic and all that other jazz), but this is --at least-- the first thematic issue of Mythic Circle. We hope you enjoy it. Let us know.

-- Lynn Maudlin and
Christine Lowentroun,
Editors

